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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FARM WOMEN'S EXPERIENCE OF WORK: A LOOK AT THEIR DEFINITION OF WORK AND FACTORS AFFECTING TASK PARTICIPATION

BY

LAURIE WILSON-LARSON

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SCIENCE

DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY STUDIES

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

SPRING 1991

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Laurie Wilson-Larson
(Student's Signature)

102-10633-31 Ave
(Student's Permanent Address)
Edmonton Alta
T6J 4N4

Date: April 22/91

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled FARM WOMEN'S EXPERIENCE OF WORK: A LOOK AT THEIR DEFINITION OF WORK AND FACTORS AFFECTING THEIR TASK PARTICIPATION submitted by LAURIE WILSON-LARSON in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF SCIENCE.

Brenda C. Munro
Dr. Brenda Munro
Supervisor

Janet Fast
Dr. Janet Fast

Leonard Bauer
Dr. Leonard Bauer

DATE: April 12 1991

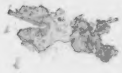
ABSTRACT

Presently there exists a dearth of research which helps us understand the work *experience* of women who live and work on family farms. The present study used qualitative methods to assess farm women's perceptions and interpretations of work; their definition of the word work as well as the factors involved in decision making about whether to participate in particular tasks over others.

A review of the literature indicates that farm women are involved in a wide variety of tasks associated with farm, family and household. These tasks have been defined as work in the existing research. For the eight farm women interviewed, not all of these tasks were perceived to be work. Usually those tasks most directly connected to economic gain or the family's 'livelihood' - direct farm related tasks and/or off farm work which is performed to support the family farm unit - were considered to be work. Research to date does not appear to have investigated farm women's paid on farm work but has looked at what is called off farm work. An unanticipated but interesting finding was that many of the women in this study were involved in paid work which took place on the family farm. Off farm work rather than this type of paid on farm work has been more extensively considered in the existing research related to the work of farm women.

Five contextual factors consistently were referred to by the women as ones that affected the likelihood of their participation in particular tasks. These five factors include the effects of the environment; farm structure; family structure; social/community influences; and individual variables. An interaction between the various contexts was found, with the environmental context and farm structural context generally having greater influence in decision making than the other contexts. The contextual factors found in this study to influence farm women's activity participation also were found to have an ongoing influence which accounted for changes in activity

participation over time. While not unique to sociological literature, the use of 'context' to understand farm women's work behavior is relatively unique.



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The first acknowledgement must go to the women who participated in this study. They gave of their time and experiences to help me understand work and task participation on family farms - from their perspective.

I would also like to acknowledge the insight of many people who I have had the opportunity to work with at varying points in the research process: Norah Keating, Lyle Larson (to whom I am indebted for introducing the term context at a difficult stage in my research), Susan McDanniel, and Janice Morse. They each helped me to broaden my understanding at often difficult times in the process of my research.

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I Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Making the behaviors and issues of importance to family farm women visible is a developing concern. Often the work women do on a farm is viewed as a continuation of the role allocated to them in the home (Gold, 1987). There is a growing body of research which indicates that farm women play a major role in family farms in three main categories of work: 1) household work, 2) farm work and 3) off-farm employment[1]. However, there is has not been a congruous, clear definition of these categories of work used in the existing research. Hence, variables used to measure the work of farm women within these categories are unique to the individual researchers limiting the ability to make comparisons and draw conclusions.

What is clear from the research is that farm women are involved in many aspects of the farming operation and that researchers define the work of farm women in various ways (for example: Keating, Doherty & Munro, 1987; Smith, 1987; Watkins, 1985; Scholl 1982 and 1983). However, only actual work behaviors and the amount of participation has been well studied while farm women's experience[2] is considered only minimally, usually in relation to those factors researchers believe might affect farm women's work behavior. For example, we don't know why farm women are involved in some tasks over others and what they think about their involvement in those things in which they are involved. An emphasis on work behaviors and the tendency of researchers to speculate about reasons for participation has lead to a fragmented view of those factors which affect farm women's actual participation in particular activities and/or likelihood of participating in those activities.

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[1]Each of these is thoroughly illustrated and referenced in the Review of the Literature section.

[2]Experience is defined in the "definitions" section of this chapter.

What has yet to be clarified is whether we know about all of the tasks in which farm women are involved (that is, are we asking them the right questions to be sure we know all of the tasks) and just what it is the women call the things they do (that is, are we interpreting the things they do accurately and from their perspective). Such a clarification would provide important direction for future research questions and interpretations through an increased understanding of the women's perceptions of what they do.

It is important that we understand the realities of farm women and fundamental that their voices be taken into consideration as research, programs and policies are developed which consider their needs and experiences. It is clear from existing farm research that recognition of the work of farm women is limited. In an Alberta study of "Perceptions of Farm Women," Women of Unifarm (1984) found that men perceived farm women's contributions of labor and time to the family farm to be much lower than the women perceived themselves to be undertaking. Pearson (1980) cited similar findings from an International Harvester survey. Despite such perceptions, Keating, Doherty and Munro (1987) in a study of resource allocation of Alberta farm women and men, found on average women performed 11.8 hours of work daily while men performed only 8.9 hours.

Research clearly indicates farm women's most visible contribution to the farm is their domestic work (Sachs, 1985). Keating et al (1987) found that farm men are more likely to participate in farm work tasks. The greater the involvement in tasks which contribute directly to the formal economy (such as farm work tasks as opposed to household tasks), the more likely the attribution of a public identity as farmer (Keating et al, 1987). Hence, men usually experience an enhanced public identity as farmer due to their greater involvement in direct farm work tasks. These findings lead one to ask

what it is that encourages farm women to continue to contribute substantially to the family farm despite such limited visible support for their efforts.

Definitions

A qualitative research method will be used for investigating the research questions in this study. A commonality across all approaches to qualitative research is that society is explored from an emic point of view (Field & Morse, 1985). That is to understand life from the perspective of the participants, from the everyday experiences of the informants. Hence, for the purposes of this study, experience is defined as farm women's perceptions and interpretations of events or behaviors. It includes "such things as the ways in which individuals come to agreements, what values they hold and how priorities are negotiated" (Field & Morse, 1985).

The family farm discussed in this study consists of a farm enterprise which is owned and operated by one or both members of the farm couple. It may also include older and/or younger generations of extended family who play a minor role or very significant role in the management of the farming operation.

When discussing farm women and their work, it is important to discuss the terms of reference. A farm woman could be someone who is the head of a farming enterprise (an independent worker), a co-operator (usually a wife or wife-partner), or an employee of the farmer (a farm worker or hired help) (Boivin, 1987). All of these bring to mind important images of farm women. However, it is only the co-operator farm women who have been included as informants in this study. Included in this study are women who are married and living on a farm. Either the couple jointly or husband own the farming enterprise and both work to meet the needs of the family farm.

Purpose and Rationale

The intent of this study was to develop a better understanding of farm women's experience of what they do on the family farm. Thus one purpose was to discover what farm women call 'work'. Rather than to assume we know what farm women define as work, it was important to develop a sense of how they defined their activity participation. What activities do they call work and what do they call those activities in which they engage but which they do not consider to be work. This understanding is important if we are to develop an awareness of farm women's experiences on family farms.

The second objective was to develop an understanding of those factors which influence the women's task participation. In light of seemingly little visible support for their efforts, it is important to ask why farm women continue to contribute to the family farm enterprise in the ways they do. What factors influence their engagement in particular tasks over others. In order to further our awareness of farm women's experience, it is important to develop an awareness of the factors which affecte their activity participation.

II. Review of Literature

Research related to farm women's definition of work, and to the factors that influence farm women's involvement in particular tasks is limited. Much of what we know can be extracted only in bits and pieces from studies which are largely concerned with the types of work in which farm women are involved. An awareness of the actual work behaviors of farm women is an important component of farm women's experience[1] of work. Since the types of work in which farm women participate has been researched with greatest depth, the following discussion will begin with this body of research. This will be followed by a discussion of the research which considers farm women's experience of work from the perspective of the farm women themselves.

The Work Behaviors of Farm Women

There are many difficulties which exist in defining the contribution of women to the family farm. To date, their contribution to the family farm has not been defined or measured uniformly. This makes it difficult to understand the nature of farm women's contribution to the family farm. However, within the literature related to the work of farm women there appear three main types or categories of work:

1) household work,
2) farm work and
3) off-farm employment.

As yet the literature lacks a consistent, clear definition of these categories of work. Hence, variables used to measure the work of farm women are unique to individual researchers. This makes it difficult to make comparisons and draw conclusions.

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[1]Experience is defined for the purposes of this study in the Introduction on page 1.

Farm Work

There is a small yet growing body of literature related to farm women's involvement in farm work tasks. As with other types of work in which farm women are involved, the range of tasks has been defined in various ways. Researchers may simply note that women are involved in farm work, or they may break farm work into as many as fourteen tasks.

There is very little agreement in the literature about the sub-categories of farm tasks. Researchers most often use livestock management (Draughn et al., 1988, Watkins, 1985, Keating et al., 1987; Scholl, 1983, Scholl, 1982), errand running (Draughn et al., 1988, Buchanan et al., 1982, Boulding, 1980, Farmline, 1982, Scholl, 1982), and field work (Draughn et al., 1988, Farmline, 1982, Scholl, 1983, Scholl, 1982) to describe farm women's farm work involvement. However, the operational definitions used for these terms vary.

For example, field work, as it appears in the literature (Draughn et al., 1988, Farmline, 1982, Scholl, 1983, Scholl, 1982), is quite complicated to consider. In an analysis of the USDA National Farm Women survey (Scholl, 1982; Scholl, 1983; Farmline, 1982), field work was defined as any field work which did not entail use of machinery. Other researchers who evaluated a category called field work failed to define farm women's participation in such a way that it could be clearly deliniated what they were measuring (Boulding, 1980; Draughn et al., 1988). Hence, it is difficult to know just what farm women's field work is or how it is defined and measured.

In light of problems with definition and measurement, several researchers have subdivided field work to include such categories as harvesting (Boulding, 1980; Farmline, 1982; Scholl, 1982); planting (Boulding, 1980); plowing, disking, cultivating and planting (Farmline, 1982; Scholl, 1982); applying fertilizers,

herbicides, or insecticides (Farmline, 1982; Scholl, 1982); and tractor/truck driving (Pearson, 1980; Boulding, 1980; Scholl, 1983). These researchers have made at least some effort to define field work more specifically in order to develop a clearer understanding of the types of field work in which farm women participate. However, the above illustrates that field work is not defined or measured consistently across studies.

In an effort to further develop our understanding of women's farm work involvement, other researchers have evaluated a number of additional sub-categories of farm work and found farm women participating in management/coordinator activities, such as office work (Buchanan et al., 1982; Draughn et al., 1988; Scholl, 1982; Boulding, 1980; Watkins, 1985) and supervision of hired workers (Draughn et al., 1988, Scholl, 1982). Watkins (1985) also included equipment and building maintenance as farm work tasks in which farm women participate.

Some categories of work have been inconsistently categorized by researchers. For example, many farm women perform duties associated with lawn maintenance, home gardens and animals kept for family consumption. While some researchers view home gardens and lawn care as household work (Scholl, 1983, Scholl, 1982; Watkins, 1985), others consider them to be farm work tasks (Draughn et al., 1988; Rosenfeld, 1986; Boulding, 1980).

When one looks at the involvement of farm women in the multitude of farm tasks, the importance of understanding farm women's work from their personal perspective becomes more obvious. Clearly farm women are active in many farm tasks. With the exception of Boulding's (1980) qualitative research, there has been very little effort to check the above categories for breadth and inclusiveness relative to women's experience. Without an understanding of women's experience of work and

the factors affecting their participation in various farm tasks, we can see only part of the total picture of farm women's work.

Household Work

Research indicates that the farm household is organized in a traditional manner with women maintaining primary responsibility for household work (Keating et al., 1987; Smith, 1987). "In fact, it remains a woman's responsibility even when she works for pay outside the home..." (Smith, 1987 p. 157). Yet, household work remains the least well operationalized defined of the three main categories of farm women's work.

Researcher most often classify domestic tasks as "household work" (Boulding, 1980; Keating et al., 1987; Wilkening & Bharadwaj, 1967; Scholl, 1982; Gladwin, no date; Scholl, 1983). However, there still exists a lack of consensus regarding the operational definition of household work. The use of such a broad category leaves one to guess at what exactly is entailed in the performance of household tasks.

As with farm work, most researchers are inconsistent in their use of sub-categories of household work tasks and in their measurement of farm women's involvement in these tasks. Such inconsistencies make it difficult to develop a clear picture of farm women's involvement on the family farm.

However, there are at least four general household tasks in which farm women are involved: parenting (Draughn et al. 1988; Pearson, 1980; Watkins, 1985; Boulding, 1980; Wilkening & Bharadwaj, 1967); food production/preparation (Draughn et al., 1988; Boulding, 1980; Pearson, 1980; Watkins, 1985; Wilkening & Bharadwaj, 1967); employee accommodations (Buchanan et al., 1982; Watkins, 1985); and general household duties (Watkins, 1985; Draughn et al., 1988).

Despite problems with the research, it is apparent that most women are involved in performance of at least some domestic tasks (Scholl, 1982; Scholl, 1983). One Canadian study has estimated that farm women spend approximately 40 hours per week on domestic tasks (Smith, 1987). Keating and Doherty (1985) in a study of both men and women found that on average farm women spent 66 hours per week doing household work. Clearly, it appears from the Canadian findings that household work is a major female responsibility in farm families.

While many of the above household work categories appear to be in support of the family, such categories as employee accommodation and employee meals leads one to understand the importance of the activities which occur in the domestic sphere which support the farm enterprise. Activities such as food planning and buying, nursing/first aide, food production, and routine housework (Watkins, 1985) may also be at least indirectly supportive of the farm enterprise. One could even go so far as to suggest a long term link between child rearing and the farm enterprise since child rearing has the potential to provide future helpers/workers and potential heirs for the farm. However, there has been little consideration of these inter-connections from the farm women's perceptions and interpretations of work. Such a view may enhance our understanding of the underlying structures/dynamics which affect farm families' decisions about task participation.

How does the farm woman perceive/experience her involvement in household activities? Existing research does not help us to answer this question. Closer evaluation of farm women's work activities may illustrate those factors which play a role in their work behaviors. Insight into farm women's attitudes, beliefs and behaviors associated with household work would facilitate our understanding of their

experience as well as develop an appreciation of those factors involved in their participation in particular household tasks.

Off Farm Work

Despite farm women's farm and household work demands, there has been an increasing awareness that many also engage in paid work off the farm. Most researchers in the 1980's acknowledge the prevalence of women's off farm work (Draughn et al., 1988; Pearson, 1980; Buchanan et al., 1982; Boulding, 1980; Keating et al., 1987; Scholl, 1983; Scholl, 1982; Smith, 1987). However, much of the concern has centered around whether or not the respondents surveyed worked off the farm with little effort to understand the phenomenon.

In a Canadian review, Smith (1987) analyzed census figures and Labour Force Survey estimates and found that approximately one-third of female farm operators and female spouses were employed mainly in non-agricultural occupations. She found that in 1981 26.1% of all Canadian farm women (spouses) had non-agricultural employment. The average weeks worked off the farm per year by these women was 35 (Smith, 1987). Smith (1987) found these figures to be significantly greater than those seen in the 1971 census and Labour Force Survey estimates. Other researchers have found that as few as 39.1% (Draughn et al., 1988) and as many as 51% (Woznjak & Scholl, 1988) of women work off the farm. However, these researchers give little indication of the amount of time spent doing off farm work.

In an effort to develop a sense of the amount of work off the farm, other researchers have conducted surveys to find the average number of off farm work hours per week (Keating et al. 1987; Gladwin, no date). They have found as little off farm work involvement as 2.4 hours/week on average (Keating et al., 1987) and as much as 17.4 hours/week on average (Gladwin, no date). While these figures provide

additional insight into the experience of the women's off farm work hours, they provide little insight into the seasonal fluctuations and/or full- or part-time nature of their jobs.

Farm women also are involved in independant self-employment activities. These activities are those in which the women participate for financial gain but are not viewed as paid off farm employment in the formal sense. Such extra economic activities may include self employment on or off the farm or informal employment by an employer (for example, an auctioneer). Boulding (1980) found that all of the women she questioned processed and sold farm goods/products. She also found that some women were involved in on or off farm activities which did not use farm products but were undertaken for economic gain. Except for Boulding's (1980) study, little attention has been paid to the possibility of self-employment on or off the farm.

While it is important to research off farm employment and the many variations of it, it seems equally important to understand what factors are involved in decisions about whether to work off the farm or participate in some form of extra economic activity. Keating et al. (1987) found that 75% of the employed women in their study would, regardless of economic necessity, keep their off farm jobs. An awareness of the farm women's experience of off farm work and/or participation in extra economic activities may help us develop a greater depth of understanding of the place of such activities in the farm family. It seems possible that participation in off-farm employment and extra economic activities is associated with the experience of work of farm women as it is seen in the family farm enterprise.

The Experience of Work of Farm Women

Research has given some indication of the experiences of women who live on a farm from a more general perspective. However, very little research exists which is

concerned with farm women's interpretation of the term 'work'[2] and the subsequent definitions they attach to 'work'[3] tasks. Just what is work to them? How do they define the various tasks in which they participate regularly? How is it that they came to perform particular tasks and what factors affected this involvement? Where do they believe their 'work' activities fit in the farm/family system?

Research identifies women's "experience" in two main ways:

1) from the researchers' suppositions about what they believe to be the experience of farm women, and

2) from the women's perspective as stated by the women.

In order to ensure research is accurately representing farm women's work, it is important to consider their perspective. To develop a deeper understanding of farm women's interpretation of the rules, issues and subsequent farm work behaviors, it is necessary to have some sense of the experience of work of farm women. As the review of what farm women do has illustrated, farm women have a variety of responsibilities which overlap and interact. An increased awareness of farm women's 'work' activities and the definitions they attach to the concept of work is important to furthering our grasp of the work behaviors. As well, an awareness of the women's perspectives lends some clues to the development of an understanding of those factors which influence the likelihood of their participating in particular tasks.

Researchers' Suppositions About Farm Women's Experience of Work

It is common for researchers to describe the work of farm women as "invisible" (Keating et al., 1987; Sachs, 1985; Sachs, 1983). Sachs (1985) suggests this

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[2]The interest here is in those activities farm women define as 'work' activities.

[3]Defined here as activities which utilize labor power to complete tasks/activities necessary to the farm and/or family's function. The tasks may or may not be defined as work - using the specific term work - per say by the women.

invisibility has resulted from women's participation in an organization that is based on male authority and responsibility. Often, women's work is viewed by researchers from a domestic sphere which is largely separate from the productive, farm work sphere (Keating et al., 1987). Implicit in this approach is the view of farm women's non-farm work as not productive. Hence, farm women are seen most often by researchers as a farm work helper, rather than farmer (Sachs, 1983). Hence, farm women's most visible contribution to the farm in the research is their domestic work (Sachs, 1985).

Women are viewed in the research as an important source of support for their husbands (Keating, 1987). However, husbands also play an important role in predicting farm women's experience of stress. Researchers have found that husband and family support of farm women is an important predictor of farm women's experience of stress (Knaub, Draughn et al., 1988; Berkowitz & Perkins, 1984; Berkowitz & Perkins, 1985). Researchers consistently indicate an interdependence or interpersonal dynamic which exists in farm families which is an important source of predicting satisfaction (Berkowitz & Perkins, 1984; Keating, 1987). It appears that women who reach an agreement with their husbands about their responsibilities seem to report less stress (Berkowitz & Perkins, 1985). While these findings do not directly reflect the farm women's experience of work, they do lend some clues to factors which impact upon their experience.

Off farm work also has been found to affect women's experiences. Frequently, off farm work is important to the family farm's survival (Keating, 1987; Jones-Webb & Nickols, 1984; Smith, 1987). Yet, it has the potential to create different experiences for the farm women who participate in it. For some farm women, off farm work increases the level of conflict within the family farm enterprise (Acock & Deseran, 1986). However, Keating et al. (1987) found that most of those surveyed would

continue to work off the farm, even if they didn't need to. For these women, it has been suggested that off farm work enhances their public identity separate from that of their husbands (Keating et al., 1987).

The age of the women also seems to play a role in farm women's experiences. Older women indicate lower rates of involvement in farm work than younger women (Keating & Munro, in press). Keating and Munro (in press) propose two reasons for this apparent difference: older women may have developed a lifetime pattern during an age when farm women were seen as homemakers or older women may have had a previous farm work responsibility that has now decreased as they move into retirement and their children take over. An increased awareness of farm women's experiences might help determine whether this is a cohort effect or a lifecycle effect.

Researchers have further considered factors which could have an impact on farm women's experience of work. Such factors as reference group support (McKenry & Hamdorf, 1985), coping skills (Weigel et al., 1987; Knaub, Abbott et al., 1988), belief in farming as an ideology[4] (Weigel et al., 1987) and support of non-traditional value orientation variables (McKenry & Hamdorf, 1985; Little et al., 1988) all seem to affect farm women's experiences of stress and satisfaction.

Research Findings Which Consider the Women's Perspective

Several researchers have found that farm women consider themselves to be agricultural helpers (Sachs, 1983; Gladwin, no date; Salamon and Keim, 1979; Morkeberg, 1978; Jones-Webb & Nickols, 1984). Many viewed their primary responsibilities in domestic terms (Pearson, 1980; Sachs, 1983; Keating, 1987). Pearson (1980) found that those women who defined their responsibilities in purely

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[4]This is a fundamentalist approach in which farming is seen as a way of life for the women.

domestic terms expressed fewer satisfactions than those who rejected the traditional female behavior and attitudinal proscriptions. She found women who defined their position in more traditional terms were more likely to assume a subservient role and often were directed by their husbands. "These women complain of the rigors of farming, the physical discomforts, [and] the difficulty it presents in maintaining their housekeeping standards" (Pearson, 1980, p. 572). Hence, they view farming in terms of economic necessity and are less likely to see farming as particularly enjoyable (Pearson, 1980).

Gladwin (no date) found that 55% of farm women saw themselves as partners in the family farm enterprise. She also found that 42% of farm women saw themselves as farmers, 14% saw themselves as part-time farmers, and 36% considered themselves to be farmers' wives. In a USDA study of United States farm women, 6 out of 10 believed they could run the farm if something happened to their husbands (Farmline, 1982). In contrast, Keating (1987) indicated that many farm women believed their primary responsibility was to support their husbands (Keating, 1987). Often, they did not consider themselves to be "farmers" (Sachs, 1983) and few listed farming as their primary occupation on tax forms even if they did not have off farm work (Farmline, 1982). Sachs (1983) found, in interviews with women that women often indicated a lack of self confidence, despite apparent skills performing various farm work tasks traditionally believed to be men's work.

Summary

Based on this literature review it is clear we know a great deal about the kinds of tasks in which farm women participate. How farm women themselves define and view their work behaviors has yet to be conceptualized fully. Most researchers have viewed farm women's work behaviors from a quantitative perspective which is

concerned with cataloging the particular tasks in which women participate and the amount of time they spend participating in those tasks. There is an emphasis on what farm women do rather than the development of an understanding of how the women define and view the tasks in which they participate and why they participate in particular tasks.

Only actual work behaviors and the amount of participation has been studied while farm women's perceptions and interpretations rarely have been taken into consideration. When they are considered it is usually in the context of factors researchers believe might affect farm women's activity participation. This focus has led to a fragmented view of those factors which affect farm women's actual participation in particular activities and/or likelihood of participating in those activities. Little research has been conducted which attempts to understand, from the women's persective, why they participate in some tasks over others. Hence while the research related to farm women's experience of work attempts to assess various factors affecting the experience of work of farm women, it does not provide a clear sense of farm women's experience of work. An understanding of the factors which underly farm women's work behavior as they are interpreted and subsequently acted upon by farm women has still to be more fully developed.

III. Methods

The purpose of this research was to consider farm women's experience of work and the various dynamics involved in their decisions to participate in particular activities over others. While existing research considers those tasks in which the women participate, little research exists which helps us to more fully understand the underlying factors which influence farm women's task participation. Qualitative methods are suited to examining research questions dealing with subjective experience and where there is a lack of pre-existing knowledge (Chenitz & Swanson, 1986; Field & Morse, 1985). As there is a limited base of knowledge and understanding about farm women's experience of work, qualitative methods of data collection and analysis were used to conduct exploratory research which would serve to identify important variables for subsequent explanatory or predictive research (Marshall & Rossman, 1989).

It was intended that some form of conceptual framework which helps us to understand women's experience of work would result from this study which would reflect the women's perspective. Hence, Glaser and Strauss's (1967) grounded theory model of generating theories from data was selected to guide the collection of data. Grounded theory is a valuable method to guide research when prior descriptive research has not yet occurred in a problem area (Chenitz &Swanson, 1986). Grounded theory method uses a process of exploration which generates a tentative theory which would allow the researcher to answer general questions about what is occuring and how (Chenitz &Swanson, 1986).

Theory is generated by comparative analysis which is concerned with developing categories, properties and hypotheses, rather than testing them (Burgess,1984). Hence, grounded theory is utilized to generate a conceptual framework from the data rather than from previous studies (Field & Morse, 1985).

However, this does not mean previous studies are not utilized. Field & Morse (1985) indicate that while previous studies do not drive the research they do influence the result of the work. Through constant comparative analysis used to generate grounded theory it is possible to progressively focus the research as the data becomes clearer (Chenitz &Swanson, 1986, Field & Morse, 1985). Instrumental in this type of analysis are ideas from other theorists (Field & Morse, 1985). Previous studies considering factors which consistently arise in the researchers interviews are utilized by the researcher to generate questions and illustrate gaps in the developing theory. Hence existing research is an important tool in the development of a more complete theory.

This chapter includes a detailed account of the methods utilized in the study. A discussion of the method of data collection includes the interview approach and an interview schedule. The segment which deals with the study sample includes a consideration of the sampling technique, the types of women who were recruited for involvement in the study and the process of recruitment. A discussion of data analysis and validity and reliability will complete the description of the research methods used in by the researcher.

Data Collection

The research questions were intended to discover the prominent themes and patterns in the informants' meaning structures and how these patterns are linked with one another (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). Unstructured interviews were used to generate data (Spradley 1979; Glasser and Strauss, 1967). These consisted of conversations with a purpose in which the intent was to gain an understanding of the women using their own language. This type of interview was felt to be of greater value in meeting the particular needs of the research questions than question and answer sessions since 'conversations' provide richer, more detailed data (Burgess, 1984).

Questioning about phenomena/events observed can lead to valuable information about the meanings and perceptions of farm women. This type of detailed knowledge and awareness was important to the formulation of questions which would facilitate the respondent's ability to provide more in depth information about their perceptions and the meanings associated with their experiences as farm women. Hence, the interviews were not formal interviews but a friendly intercourse in which the researcher showed interest in, understanding of and sympathy for the life of the women being interviewed (Burgess, 1984).

Interviews were of three types - unstructured interviews; card sort interviews; and telephone interviews. Each type of interview was utilized according to the need for particular types of information at particular times during the research.

According to Burgess (1984), the kinds of questions asked are crucial to the unstructured interview. He described three types of questions that may be used:

- **Descriptive questions** which encourage informants to provide information about their activities. These are the "tell me a story" type of questions.
- **Structural questions** which facilitate the understanding of how informants organize their knowledge. Structural questions ask about relationships - that is about rules and relationships in time - in an effort to develop an understanding of the relationships among things. In this study, card sort interviews were utilized as a form of structural questioning in which questions and sorts were directed toward increasing the researchers knowledge about how the informants organize their knowledge (Spradley, 1979)
- **Contrast questions** were used to facilitate discussion about the meanings of situations and provide comparisons between situations and events. Examples of

contrast questions would be "Tell me about the differences between the two jobs" and "Tell me about the similarities between the two jobs."

Each type of interview indicated in the interview schedule (below) will be described and discussed relative to it's appropriateness for the study. As well, Burgess' (1984) different types of questions which were utilized in all interviews will be discussed. The following description of the three interview types will be considered in relation to the type of questioning most likely to be utilized.

Table 2 - Interview Schedule

SUBJECT	Open Interview*	Card Sort	Telephone	Telephone
D	In person	In person	Telephone	Telephone
C	In person	In person	Telephone	Telephone
J	In person	In person	Telephone	
M		In person	Telephone	
MA		In person	Telephone	Telephone
R	In person	In person	Telephone	Telephone
G	In person	In person	Telephone	
DI			Telephone	

*Also known as Unstructured Interviews

It also was important to establish an approximate length of time for the interviews to ensure optimum responses and to limit informant fatigue (Burgess, 1984). Hence, the unstructured interviews and card sort interviews generally lasted from sixty to ninety minutes. Telephone interviews were approximately thirty minutes in length though two telephone interviews lasted approximately sixty minutes. These

longer telephone interviews included some discussion of preliminary findings and so required additional time to hear the women's comments.

Open or Unstructured Interviews

Using this particular interview approach, the researcher explores a few general topics intended to help uncover the informants' meaning perspective, but respects the way the informant frames and structures the responses (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). An unstructured interview is useful since it facilitates obtaining large amounts of data quickly and immediate follow-up questions and clarification (Marshall & Rossman, 1989).

Some problems exist when utilizing the unstructured interview technique. Burgess (1984) believes researchers need to pay particular attention to the direction, depth, and detail of the interview, the topics to be cover and the order of questions. Hence, the unstructured interviews used in this study were based upon an interview guide which contained a list of topical questions (Appendix). However, the questions asked in the interview were not restricted to this guide. Questions evolved and developed from the responses of the informants to the prepared topical guide. Hence, the interview guide was not utilized to restrict informants' responses but to facilitate them. Consistent with the qualitative method, informants were encouraged to interpret questions in the way they saw fit and they were encouraged to share with the researcher things they felt were important for the researcher to know (for example all of the informants were asked if there was additional information they felt I should know about farm women's experience of work at varying points in the research process).

This type of interview was used initially to develop a sense of what things the women called work and to develop a picture of the women's experiences of work and the things they did. Hence, it utilized all three of the question types but relied more

heavily on descriptive questions to obtain some sense of the activities in which the women were involved. Contrast questioning was instrumental in developing an initial understanding of those factors involved in the women's likelihood of participation in particular activities, and of the factors involved in defining particular activities as work.

The unstructured interviews provided the researcher with an understanding of the women's experience from their perspective. These interviews were utilized to develop a list of the various activities in which the women participated for subsequent use in the card sort interviews. It was from these interviews that the initial stages of conceptualization about women's experience were formulated, to be further developed in the card sort interviews and more extensively developed in the telephone interviews.

Card Sort Interviews

The card sorting interviews were a type of structural questioning because they functioned to explore the organization of the informants' knowledge (Spradley, 1979). These interviews facilitated the discovery of the various task groupings and the terms used to describe them. This strategy was developed when it became apparent that the women had their own unique understanding of the term 'work'. The card sort interviews were developed to facilitate an understanding of the way the women viewed and subseqently labeled the activities as they did. They were an effective means of encouraging conversation about the various tasks performed and the factors involved in participation in particular activities.

While the procedure used for the card sort interviews were similar to the ethnographic method Spradley (1979) describes, they were modified and developed to meet the needs of this study. Card sort interviews generally are used to develop taxonomies concerned with extensive and in depth cultural definitions of the informants (Spradley, 1979; Field & Morse, 1985). However, the intent of this researcher was

not to develop an understanding of the cultural definitions the women attach to various activities but to consider what activities the women view as work or non-work and what factors influence their participation in particular activities.

The first stage in preparing for and conducting the card sort interviews involved an analysis of the unstructured interviews to obtain a listing of the various activities in which the women participated. These were then placed on cards. Three sets of identical cards were made and the women were asked to sort them. Upon completion of each sort, the women were asked to name each pile and describe them. The women were given complete freedom to sort the cards in any manner they wished. The only restriction was placed on the number of piles allowed for each sort.

The first set of cards were sorted into three piles any way the women wanted. This allowed the women to present the researcher with their views of the tasks. They were then asked to label and discuss the various piles. An effort was made to develop an understanding of the various relationships among the activities within the piles they developed and among the various piles. The women were similarily asked to sort the second set of cards into two piles and the third set into as many piles as they would like. By initially limiting the number of piles into which the women could sort the cards, the researcher forced the women to begin to think about what they did and those factors which influenced not only their definition of the various tasks but also the factors which influenced the likelihood of their participation in those tasks. The open card sort allowed the informants to show the researcher a wider range of factors influencing their task participation and definition.

While a somewhat unconventional approach, it was an effective means of encouraging the women to think of the various tasks, their importance, their similarities and differences and their place in the informant's life experience. While useful as a

means of developing a sense of what activities the women call work and what they call those tasks they don't call work, the card sort data also helped the researcher develop a sense of those factors which influence the women becoming involved in various tasks. The emerging framework of the factors involved in women's involvement in various tasks was then further developed through the telephone interviews.

Telephone Interviews

The telephone interviews were more formal unstructured interviews. These interviews were based upon a need to fill gaps in the researcher's knowledge as the conceptualizations developed. These more formal interviews became narrower in focus as the conceptual framework emerged and purposive sampling continued (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). Preset topical areas were established prior to the telephone interviews. While more structured, the telephone interviews did not restrict the researcher or the informant to a preset list of questions. If questions evolved from the informant's responses, these too were asked as were questions to clarify responses. As well, informants were free to ask for clarification of any questions asked of them and effort was made to define the questions more clearly. For this study, the telephone interviews were used to clarify points and to ensure completeness of the categories and the emerging theoretical framework (Marshall & Rossman, 1989).

Telephone interviews were selected over in person interviews, in order to save time and money. All of the informants lived outside Edmonton and so trips of at least one hour each way were required for in person interviews. An initial rapport had been established through previous in person interviews such that telephone interviews were an appropriate alternative. It was therefore not expected that the data obtained from telephone interviews would be of lesser quality than in person interviews. In fact, Field and Morse (1985) suggest the use of telephone interviews to deal with 'stage

fright' common to all research. They suggest that people are used to speaking on the phone and find it easier to speak freely.

Sample

The sample for this investigation consisted of farm women who reside on farms of various types, which are owned and operated by one or both members of the farm couple. Volunteer snowball and purposeful sampling techniques were used.

All the participants were volunteer informants who were available and willing to participate in the study. Initially, an effort was made to recruite respondents through a District Home Economist. All informants for this study were screened for suitability and receptivity. On telephone screening, the women identified by the District Home Economist indicated they did not "work" on the farm and most declined to be involved. It seemed most were concerned that they were not heavily involved in farm work, only helping out occassionally as well as taking responsibility for household and family tasks. One of the informants who did participate in the study was identified by the District Home Economist, working with farm families within an Alberta farm region northwest of Edmonton. Others were then recruited through various connections of the researcher. The total sample consisted of eight farm women who resided on family farms within a 200 mile radius of Edmonton, Alberta.

Informants were selected because they were receptive and knowledgeable about the questions under study All participants were volunteers who were available and willing to participate in the study. The first informant was requested to introduce the researcher to other farm women for subsequent interviews. This type of snowball sampling design dealt with problems of receptivity which were experienced in efforts to recruit respondents suggested by the District Home Economist, as some trust was established through introductions by a mutual acquaintance (Morse, 1986).

Purposive or purposeful sampling techniques, where informants were deliberately selected by the researcher according to the needs and direction of the research (Morse, 1986; Field & Morse, 1985) also were used. Informants were selected who held specific characteristics/knowledge which added to, supported or refuted the developing conceptual framework, further enhancing the researcher's understanding of the phenomenon (Field & Morse, 1985). Interviews with informants who had different characteristics from other informants were used to further develop and check evolving conceptualizations.

Thus, to develop a more generalizable understanding about the experience of work of farm women, informants from various types of farm operations (grain, mixed, dairy etc.) were interviewed by this researcher. Initially, in the development of the conceptual framework, basic categories and their properties were identified by minimizing the differences in the sample (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Hence, the initial two informants were women who lived on a mixed farming operation, worked off the farm and had children who were still at home. Once the basic conceptualization began to form, it was necessary to maximize differences in the sample to stimulate generation of the widest possible range of information about variations, influences, and conditions all of which were important to the elaboration of the emerging conceptual framework (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). To meet this criteria, additional informants were selected individually based on the needs of the emerging framework. Hence as the research progressed, other characteristics of the sample included women who worked off the farm (full-time, part-time), women who did not work off the farm, women who did on farm work for pay (for example sold baked goods made on the farm), women who had young children at home, women who were on grain only farms, women who were on farms which were primarily livestock operations, those with older children and

those with children who had grown up and were living on or off the farm. The women had varying amounts of direct farm participation from very involved to only minimally involved, with the amount of participation not being a criterion for involvement in the study. Table 1 (below) illustrates the demographic information about the sample.

Prior telephone screening occured to select potential informants for suitability and willingness to participate in the study. At this time informants were informed of the components of the study which included a minimum of two tape recorded interviews in their home that would last approximately one to one and one-half hour each. An initial verbal consent to participate was obtained and arrangements were made to begin their involvement.

Upon first meeting and prior to initiating involvement in the study, the aims of the study were explained to each informant. A written consent (Appendix) to participate in tape recorded interviews was discussed. At this time, participants were informed that tapes and transcriptions were to be used for data analysis in looking for patterns common to farm women. The informants were encouraged to seek further clarification of any of the above initial points and a final written consent to participate was obtained.

Sampling stopped when no additional data was found to develop the characteristics of the categories discovered. At this point the sample was said to be saturated (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The interview with the eighth farm woman selected for the sample produced no new information and sampling was discontinued.

Table 1 - Demographic Information About the Sample

SUBJECT	FARM TYPE	OFF FARM WORK	CHILDREN and AGES*
D	mixed	ocassionally	1 PT - boy; 1 PT - girl
C	mixed	full-time	2 PS - boys
J	mixed	part-time (20 hr/wk)	1 A - boy (lives at home; works on farm); 1 A - girl (away at school)
M	mixed	baking out of home full-time summers	1 PT - boy; 1 PS - girl; 1 T - girl
MA	livestock	part-time (hrs. vary)	1 A - girl (works on farm; lives short distance away; 1 T - girl (away at school)
R	grain/dairy	none	2 PT - boys; 1 T girl
G	grain/dairy	bed & breakfast	1 A - boy (lives off & works off farm);
off		school tours (hrs. vary)	1 A - girl (married; lives & works farm); 1 A - girl (away at school)
DI	grain	none	3 PS - boys (1 set of twins & 1 other)

*PS = Preschool child (0-5 year old); PT = Preteen child (6-12 year old); T = Teenage child (13 - 18 year old); A = adult child (over 18 years)

Data Analysis

All interviews were tape recorded and transcribed. Names of informants and references to family members were altered upon completion of the transcript to preserve the anonymity of informants. Hyperqual, a qualitative data analysis computer program was used to facilitate data analysis and to manage the data obtained from the interviews. This program allowed the researcher to turn over to the computer the mechanical

aspects of qualitative data analysis freeing the researcher to spend more time on the interpretive components of data analysis. The researcher began by mentally organizing the data into categories and conceptualizations. This effort was then transformed into a process of electronic "cutting and pasting." The computer was most instrumental at this time enabling the researcher to code, recode, and sort data files into analytic categories. The program allowed the researcher to review text, mark segments, and then display, sort, and print segments in any order or sequence.

A comparative method of analysis was used in which data collection and analysis produced categories which were then analyzed for patterns among categories and compared with other informants' data to discover similarities and differences in the lives of the informants (Chenitz & Swanson, 1986). Examination of the first interviews allowed for the questions and structure of subsequent interviews to be further developed. Those factors and issues which were raised in earlier interviews with one informant were raised in subsequent interviews with the same and other informants to obtain elaboration and clarification.

Validity and Reliability

While useful for developing conceptual frameworks and looking for additional characteristics, qualitative research does not lend itself to replication (Stern, 1985). Each situation/individual is unique and is utilized to discover clues to develop theory. So while criteria for sample selection, data collection and data analysis may appear too flexible for validity, the main purpose is to generate theory, not to verify "facts" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

While the study cannot be replicated because the experiences of the women in this study are unique, it can be tested for reliability and predictive ability. Reliability can be tested by asking the respondents in the study to evaluate the findings (Stern,

1985). Informants in this study were requested to provide feedback to the researcher as the conceptualizations evolved ensuring a more accurate representation of their experience.

The study can be predictive since the conditions which surround the experience of work of farm women are lasting (Stern, 1985). Hence, the findings of this research have resulted in the development of an initial conceptual framework and variables which can be studied further .

IV Findings/Results

The purpose of this research was to explore farm women's experience of work. From the first efforts to obtain informants for this study, it became clear that the word 'work' had a very specific meaning to the women interviewed. When potential informants identified by the District Home Economist were contacted about the study, they refused to be involved stating that they did not work on the farm. Yet when asked, they all indicated that they participated in a variety of activities which met the needs of both farm and family. It was clear that the word 'work' had a particular and consistent meaning to these women and it seemed necessary to consider just what things the farm women defined as work. That is, it became apparent that it would be necessary to develop an understanding of what things the women called work and what they called those things they considered to be 'not work'.

Consistent with the philosophy of grounded theory, this forced a change in the original emphasis of the study. Hence the study addressed questions about the women's conceptualization of the various activities in which they participate as well as the factors affecting the decision-making which occurs as the women become involved in particular activities, some of which were called work and some of which were called other things.

Work and Non-Work

The farm women in this study are involved in a wide variety of tasks associated with farm, family and household. While the intent of the study was not to look directly at what tasks farm women participated in, all of the women studied indicated involvement in at least some activities related to the farm enterprise, household and family tasks as well as community work.

The informants in this study consistently define the word 'work' as those things pertaining to the farm enterprise. Table 3 illustrates the work tasks in which the women are involved. These tasks are, for the most part, the husband's primary responsibility. When the women participated in these tasks they considered themselves to be helpers, taking their direction largely from their husbands, although not blindly as all of the women discussed decisions with their husbands. There were many indications in the data which illustrated the tendency of the women to see themselves as primarily helpers in farm related tasks. The following is an example of this tendency of the women to view themselves as *helpers* in farm work tasks:

> J: ...I *help* with the sorting (of cattle) if we're putting one group on a different kind of food then sorting involved, there's vaccinations, ah castrating, that sort of stuff I *help* with, ...if there are calving problems, *helping* if there's a problem, there again *helping* put the cow in and *helping* with the birthing or sometimes I'm there on my own and I have to do that by myself... (authors emphasis)

It was thought that perhaps the women viewed any shared work as "helping". However, further questioning clearly indicated that the informants' husbands took primary responsibility for those things called farm work tasks. D, in discussing who is mainly responsible for farm work tasks, indicated the following:

> D: We go a lot according to the knowledge that we do have ... and he has much more expertise in that area and he has got his crop rotation down to a science...so it all depends ... I'm involved in the busy work of the farm...making sure that the little pigs are okay...the sows are fed and driving the tractor in the spring and the combine in the fall. But anything about repair, maintenance, purchase of new machinery, breeding stock, anything like that ... he'll tell me about it or he'll explain why we have to do something, but he'll make the decision and he'll do it.

The farm women in this study defined the word work from a direct economic perspective. While they all viewed some of the domestic activities as 'work' they did not call it work when asked what things might be viewed as work and what things might not. There were a variety of descriptions used to label the activities that were not

Work	Running to Town			Repairs and Parts
				Farm Supplies
	Keeping the books	Banking		Deposits/withdrawls
				Deal with Bankers
				Fill out forms
		Records		Crops
				Livestock
				Kept for Auditor
		Forms		Government
	Live-stock	Barn work		Cleaning
				Maintaining
		Looking after animals		Treating
				Birthing
			Things you do for newborns	Clipping
				Castrating
				Vaccinations
				Feeding
				Bedding
				Milking
				Moving
				Chasing
				Breeding
	Field work	Machines	Maintenance	Gas
				Oil
				Repairs
			Driving	Grain Truck
				Swather
				Combine
				Harrowing (Tractor)
				Meals to Field
	Discussing			Major Purchases
				Clarifying activities
				Crops
				Livestock

Table 3 - Work Activities

truly 'work'. These ranged from "my responsibility" to "just what I do". There seemed to be a lack of awareness on the women's part of the economic value of those activities that were least directly connected to economic gain. Table 4 illustrates the things the women do that are not considered to be 'work'. Household, family and community activities were least likely to be considered 'work' by the informants in this study. While these activities are often called work by the women in that their completion consumes energy, when asked what work they did on the farm, they all listed farm work tasks which were described by many of the informants as those things associated with their "livelihood." However, there are clearly times when anything the women do including those things they don't consider to be work, are considered to be work. The following illustrates this tendency:

> D: ...it almost goes according to how busy the schedule is whether I would consider it to be work or not, you know if the schedule's really busy then I know it's work, if it's not busy it's just routine...I suppose it is work if you class work as what you do for a living...

Table 5 considers those paid activities in which the informants were involved. Those women who worked off the farm for money or had on farm paid work which was regular and predictable were more likely to call it work even when their reason for working was not economic necessity. This was most clearly seen in the card sort interviews where those women with regular paid off farm work or on farm paid work were more likely to place the activity into a pile which was considered work or associated with the livelihood of the farm.

Things I Do\ My Responsibility	Com-munity Work	Boards			Agricultural
					Charities
					Community League
		Leaders/ organizers			Ball Teams
					Scouts/guides
					4H
	Family	Yard Work			Trimming
					Flowers
					Mowing the lawn
		Whole Family		Keeping husband happy	Help during stressful times
					Keeping out of way
				Family Time Together	At home
					Day trips
					Vacations
		Kids	Kids Activ-ities	Planning	Registering
					Finding
					Spectator/Attending
					Driving to
			Looking After	Getting baby-sitters	Organizing
					Finding
				Playing/ time with	Bringing/working with in own tasks
					Reading
					Readying for bed
				Appoint-ments	Taking to
					Planning
					Laundry
				House-cleaning	Cleaning
					Picking-up
		House-hold	Food	Family Livestock	Milking
					Feeding
					Care
				Family Garden	Canning
					Working-in
				Meals	Clean-up
					Preparing
					Baking
					Groceries/shopping

Table 4 - Things I do (non-work Activities)

Things I Do for Money	On Farm Paid Work		Lessons (Horseback Riding)
			Boarding Livestock
			Guest Ranch/Bed and Breakfast
			School Tours of the Farm
			Selling Produce from Family Garden &/or Livestock
			Baking for Sale to Local Families, Hotels and Businesses
	Off Farm Work	Casual	Nurse
			Office Worker
		Part Time	Nurse
			Instructor Trainer (Horses)
		Full Time	Managed a Summer Resort
			Educational Psychologist

Table 5
Things That I Do For Money

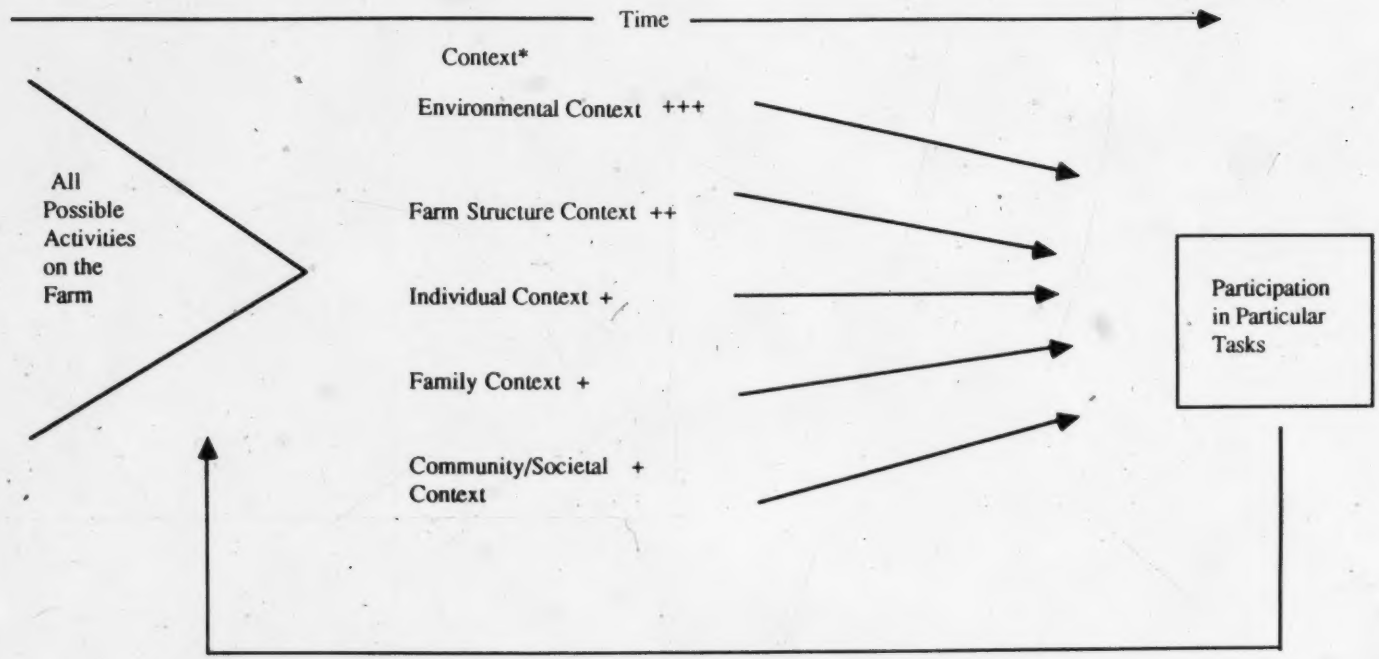
Model of Contextual Elements Affecting Activity Participation

Throughout the interviews, there appeared to be a number of factors which appeared consistently as important factors affecting the women's work/non-work activity participation. The model which was developed (Figure 1), considers farm women's task participation relative to those contexts which foster or inhibit participation in particular activities. All of the informants indicated the importance of various contextual elements which affected the likelihood of their performance of particular tasks. The following description of the model considers those contexts which were found to affect the informants' task participation.

All Possible Activities

At any given moment in time there is a wide range of possible activities in which a farm woman might become involved. This list of all possible activities is "filtered" and becomes more defined as the women consider them relative to five contextual elements - the environmental context, the farm structure context, the family context, the individual context and the social/community context. Hence, the women would generally make decisions about task participation from a narrower list of all possible activities. This list of all possible activities changes constantly according to past, present and perceived future impact of the contextual elements. Thus the list becomes narrower or wider according to the particular circumstances of the women. For example, illness, injury or death of any family member or other farm worker could affect the list of activities.

> Researcher: Is there anything that would change the decision making and the way that people are responsible for tasks on your farm?
>
> J: Yeh, of course there are things that would change it. Health would change it.



*The five contextual elements interact with one another (not pictured here) as well as directly influence task participation. The interaction which occurs is unique to the situation the woman is faced with at any time.

The '+' indicates the influence of the various context's with the '+++' being most influential and '+' being least. This is not to say that Individual, Family or Community/Societal contexts always have least influence but to indicate that it is usually the environmental and Farm Context's which are considered first and most likely to 'force' the woman to be involved in some activities over others.

Figure 1 - Model of Contextual Elements Affecting Activity Participation

R: ...in June I fell down and broke my leg so I couldn't do anything so that the kids kinda got a crash course on how to milk cows.

In the same way, hiring farm help, greater or lesser involvement of extended family, maturation of family children and the like could affect the list of all possible activities by a process of decision making which takes into account the changed contextual elements. The following example illustrates these effects on one woman's activity participation.

R: Well, when we - this is kind of a different set up here - met, we've been married now fifteen years and when we first got married, just before we got married, my husband's parents lived in this house and then when we were getting married they built a new house which is just on the other side of the driveway, there you came in ... he had two younger sisters still at home, so when his parents moved over there [husband] and his younger brother stayed here in the house. So when we got married, [brother in law] stayed with us here for two years until they got married. So his younger sisters were always helping out with chores. And I was, I guess not really expected, [to do] my part to help, I really enjoyed it, so in between the girls [sister in laws] and myself, we did all the milking. And then, [husband's] brother got married, and they just, they just live across the road here. So then as the girls [sister in laws] got older and they moved away ... that kind of left them [husband and brother and brother's] wife and myself to kind of do the chores again. The men usually did them in the morning and we did them in the evening and sometimes, we had ... seven children all under the age of six years old, and like that was a lot of fun trying to do your chores with these seven kids around. It would take a long time to do these chores because you were running after the kids wondering where this one was or that one was. ...I gradually started like that and then two years ago [brother in law] and his wife they built a new barn across the road so they have their own dairy set up now....Then we were totally on our own. So ... for about a year, it is just [husband] and myself doing chores all the time until just about September. Now we have this hired girl come and then this hired fellow come too ....which has really left me with a lot of free time which is hard to get used to. ... but there's designated time you are always out there doing chores and now all of a sudden you have got these three hours you are free...

The women studied had particular tasks in which they were more likely to participate. For all of the women, those activities illustrated in Table 4 (Things I Do) were activities for which they were primarily responsible, with their husbands helping when needed. All of the women studied participated in at least some farm work tasks (as listed in Table 3, Farm Work). The informants consistently gave examples of the

five contextual elements, illustrated in Table 6, which influenced the likelihood that they would participate in particular activities over others, from moment to moment, and day to day.

Table 6 - Factors of Influence for Each of the Contextual Elements

Context	Factors of Influence
Environmental	Changing seasons Weather Crop needs Livestock needs
Farm Structure	Type of farm Physical layout of the farm and it's buildings Crop needs Livestock needs Ownership (legal partnership, non-partnership etc.) Management practices - hired help in the home and/or on farm Off farm work
Family	Joint decision-making Extended family Impact of long standing farm structure (prior to woman's arrival) Presence and age of children Child care needs and social activities Socialization for succession
Individual	Women's conscious actions and unique nature Belief structures Interests Farming as a lifestyle Women's unique histories Off farm work to enhance sense of self Individual skills
Social/community	Social image of what farm women are like Social expectations Sanctions against non-conformity

Context

In the model in Figure 1 the influence of the five contextual elements, which play a role in the likelihood of women participating in some tasks over others is illustrated. The context of activity participation is a guiding mechanism which influences farm women's participation in particular activities. All activities are influenced, in varying degrees, by these contexts. The influence of context is ongoing in nature in that one can consider continuity and changes in activity selection from moment to moment and day to day. Hence it takes into account the changing as well as consistent nature of the various contexts in which the women work and live as they play a role in activity participation. It also takes into account the interaction which occurs among the contexts as they exert varying degrees of influence on the likelihood of the women's participation in activities. In light of an awareness of the changing and interactive nature of the contextual elements, each will be viewed individually as it influences the informant's activity participation. However, this is not to assume that the contexts function independently. They do not. The women continually take into account all of the contextual elements as they make decisions, through a system of checks and balances in which each element is weighed against the other and decisions are made. The following illustrates the process of weighing various factors in decision making about task participation:

> Researcher: When you decided this morning to get up and do whatever it is you do for your day, what's involved in making those decisions?
> D: ...I would have to say first of all that it depends on the time of year, the season it is and in any given season, the weather conditions etc....this is mainly for stuff that has to do with farm operations, that would be a major consideration as to what we decided. If there was conditions for rain, we would definitely, I would definitely make a decision to go out and help [husband] finish up anything that has to be done outside, that was necessary to be done before that weather came...the family type of thing, my making a decision during the day

time, during the daylight hours, say during school hours, would definitely go hand in hand with the curricular activities that the kids are having, if they have something going on that preempts anything in the house...I would either try and get my work done sooner or I would leave it...

R: Would that be farm work too?

D: That would not include any field work. Anything out in the field, the children have learned to understand that during spring and fall, that is first. As far as the barn goes, unless it's an emergency, the children, their games etc. generally come first because the barn work is one on such a regular basis.

It also is important to recognize the influence of each context upon the other contexts. For example, many natural forces have the potential to make or break a farm and hence have considerable influence on everyone's decision making about activities. As will be illustrated in the following description of the environmental and farm structural context's, the farm family must be able to recognize the needs of fertilizers or insecticides; the optimal time to plant seed and take off crops; the changing weather conditions and their subsequent impact upon the farming operation; the breeding, birthing and health needs of their particular type of livestock etc. in order to effectively manage the effects of the environmental context. Decisions must always be made with an awareness of the environmental context if the farm is to survive. For these reasons the actual structure and ongoing operation of the farm is strongly influenced by the environmental context. It is the way in which the farmer deals with those needs that is considered a farm structure contextual variable.

Environmental Context

Perhaps the most uncontrollable element in farm women's lives is the environmental context's impact upon the ongoing function and structure of the farm. Life on a farm is largely dictated by such environmental forces as the changing seasons, weather, layout of the land, needs of the crops and/or livestock, and the like.

All of the women talked about their activity selection relative to the season. The following are typical examples of the environmental influence on their activity selection:

R: ...winter time things aren't that hard...come spring time, you know or just a couple of weeks before spring...if something doesn't go right or you are told something that you thought that you did or you were told oh it's done wrong, (you say) okay, I did it wrong, you don't argue...but you kind of learn after a few years that it's not worth the hassle and the fighting that you can get into...and in the fall, I think in combining, time is even more so (limited) because a lot of time you are still trying to get hay and you are trying to combine...and there is only so many hours to do the things in...

D: ...in the spring you have to have the chores done and everything so that you're in the field at the earliest possible moment.

J: ...afternoons are usually spent outside doing whatever season we're in, if it's winter time then it's working helping with cattle, sorting, vaccinating that sort of thing, if it's summer time it's yard work or garden again, fall and spring you work outside on the land...if it's fall then it's combining...

J's example (above) also illustrates the impact of the unique needs of livestock, crops, and the yard and garden, as they create an environmental contextual influence on the decisions of the farm woman.

Many of the women also altered their involvement in off farm activities or work depending upon the season.

D: (in discussing her off farm work indicates) she (employer) said she will not call in the spring and she won't call in the fall and once there were a few ground rules, she used to be on a farm as well, there was no problem. As long as she knows the busy times of the year and as long as it's not during those times, that's fine...

J: I'm lucky in that I can almost pick and choose the times that I work so that when we're really having a busy season at home, I don't work as much. When things are slower at home I work more and it works out best.

Others indicated some conflict between the seasonal changes of the farm and off farm work.

R: ...in harvest and in springs work when I'm trying to come home and and balance things here, like get up and go to work and work all day, pick up your kids, come home, make a meal, take it out, bring it back, do dishes and have to put the kids to bed all by myself...but then there's the flip side...in the winter time...there are those days when he can decide well today we're gonna all go to town together in the middle of the week...

In one interview D talked about the impact of the weather upon her immediate decisions about task participation :

> D: If there was conditions for rain, we would definitely, I would definitely make a decision to go out and help [husband] finish up anything that has to be done outside, that was necessary to be done before that weather came.

Perhaps D gave us at least some hint of the uncontrollable nature of the environmental context on farm women's lives in the following statement:

> D: ...but then you can get a ah big screw thrown into it too because last year we had no intention of putting up a new machine shed but the tornado came through.and ah blew the old one right apart and so all of a sudden in July we have to start planning on building a new machine shed...

Farm Structure

The location of the the main farm activity relative to where the family home is, the distance between fields, the location of livestock and the availability of hired farm help all influence decisions about final activity participation. This can be seen in the following examples:

> K: ...once in a while I do help with things actually up on the farm. It's a little different because we're living a little ways off, like a quarter of a mile off the actual farm site, but once in a while I will go and help with treating cattle, or moving cattle or doing that kind of thing. But especially now with the kids being so little, I don't do an awful lot of that...

> M: ...I tend to do only here what we have, like we've got my own little stock out here and chickens and things like that and when (my husband's) working out here, I'm out here but as far as the other land, I'm not...

Many women acknowledge the needs of the crops and livestock in their consideration of what they will do.

> D: As far as moisture on the crop if you want to spray or wanting to get ah, in the fall like some swathing done, you can't swath until it's reasonably dry, you can't combine till it's reasonably dry. So in the morning you would do repairs, you would ah you know change the oil,

anything like that in the vehicles because like in combining time very seldom do you get going before noon because of the moisture.

Clearly in this instance the needs of the crops dictate what will be done and when. The same can be seen relative to livestock management.

J: ...calving season I'm very involved in, I'm out there checking to see if there are problems, helping if there's a problem...

D: For guilts, for first litter sows you should check on them once and a while so that they don't take too long because then there's a tendency for the babies to die inside but for sows that have had a litter you can just let them go, they'll do their own thing...

As can be seen, if livestock are part of the farm familie's livelihood, participation in particular activities will be dictated to some extent by the needs of birthing or ailing animals.

Sometimes the layout of the buildings is designed specifically so the women could be involved in particular components of the farming operation:

D: ...we rent two other barns on two other places... (my husband) takes care of them totally. They only have to be gone to once a day so he does that. This barn here (just outside the door within a short walking distance) on the place is the farrowing and the wieners and ah like in Europe they use just about strictly women in farrowing barns because they have a higher understanding and they are much calmer around the sows when they're farrowing and the sows will react to that so ah from the very first time we had sows I would go out there.

The particular business arrangement (legal partnership, non-partnership etc.) between husband and wife also plays a role in the decision's women make about their activity participation. This is reflected in the following statement:

D: ...I'm fifty percent owner of this (the contents of a farm commodity account) and...we split it right down the middle and the labor that's involved in getting it is split not too bad either, I think, you know, the physical labor I certainly don't do as much as my husband because he's got a lot more strength than I do but ah...I consider myself a farmer.

Even with a consideration of the partnership arrangements, each individual farm would have its unique needs and influences depending upon the management practices employed. For example, the ability to hire help, both inside and out of the home, has

an impact upon the decisions farm women make in selecting activities. One woman expressed relief to have the assistance of a hired hand while others see their involvement on the farm as a way of reducing the need for hired help.

> R: ...we were totally on our own. So for the longest time it was just for, ah, for about a year, it is just (my husband) and myself doing chores all the time until just oh about September, now we have this hired girl come and then this hired fellow come too, so - which has really left me with a lot of free time.
>
> D: (when considering a decrease in her involvement on the farm indicates) ...it would probably demand that the number of sows be lowered, that maybe the number of acres be lowered or another person would have to be hired. So what's the sense to go out and work when that money would just have to go to pay somebody else's wages anyway?
>
> K: ...I am very fortunate during the work year ... if I've been working at University and working at town I have a lady come in twice a month and she cleans my house which is wonderful...(at another point in the interview K also discussed hiring a babysitter to look after her children while she worked off the farm) ...I've been really trying to find babysitting for my kids and so in the morning a girl that - I'm going back to work three days a week starting in September - so in the morning a girl came ... who was interested in coming into my house to baby sit ... she came and so we had kind of a long talk and an interview about her coming to work here which ended well and she's gonna start coming to baby sit in the home.

However, another woman began working off the farm because it became apparent that if she didn't work off the farm her husband would have to and the consequences of that were not to their liking.

> J: ...We decided that because of my education and the proximity to a hospital (this woman is a nurse), it was the easiest for me to make a good salary, then for my husband to have to go to the oil fields and be gone for two weeks at a time or something so it was easier for me to work near home and make a very good salary than to have my husband leave home and go away to work and we would still have had to had somebody come in to help the cattle, so it was hard but it worked well.

Family Context

The family contextual field involves family relational issues such as extended family involvement, presence of children, age of children, and general family

organization. While there was considerable variation in the informants' organization of family activities, one consistent family organizational characteristic was found among the informants. In seven of the eight families, joint decision-making usually occurred. Joint decision-making was most likely to occur when there was a major family or farm purchase or change being considered. In these families, the couple either jointly completed tasks in both the home and farm areas or jointly made decisions while each usually performed tasks in particular areas. For example MA talks about her joint role in the following statement:

> MA: We [husband, adult children and MA] sort of jointly decide on what's happening with the farm activities...I don't think there is any activity that any one of us makes final decisions without talking about it, whether it's breeding mares or sheep or...vaccinating...[daughter] takes care of the breeding horses...[husband] takes care mainly of the training horses...and I kind of (do) a little bit of everything, wherever I need to pick up...

The following illustrates K's involvement in making decisions for the farm and family:

> K: My husband and I sit down every little while together and go over our farm budget...what we can afford and discuss farm purchasing and house purchasing too if we're considering buying anything in the house...

The basic child care needs and social activities of the children often are an integral part of farm women's activities. Such tasks as getting them ready for bed, attending their events and driving them to various activities often require the women to alter their schedule to meet the needs of their children. With the addition of children to the family system, the couple must both socialize their children and begin to interact with other social systems which meet the needs of their children (such as school, 4H, little league, Brownies etc.). All of the women became in some way or another involved in the various community/recreational organizations in which their children were involved.

Socialization of children for succession also can be seen in the following example:

> D: ...somehow the children have to be taught that farming isn't all physical labor and six o'clock in the morning till ten o'clock at night outside sweating because we're gonna run out of farmers if that's the way we're gonna train our children. They have to know that there is, that you are allowed to take time to have fun, you know, to get away.

Individual Context

The individual context recognizes the individual's conscious actions and the unique nature of the individual farm women - their belief structures, their interests, their commitment to farming as a lifestyle and the like. The women's unique histories, such as upbringing on a farm or in town, educational background, and past experiences all have varying affects upon the women's task participation. There are inherent differences among farm women which require researchers to acknowledge individual thought in the decision-making process.

D talked about the individual context as it affected her definition of various activities in the following way:

> R: What activities do you view as work, what do you call work?
> D: Work...my personality and my interests etc. I was brought up on a dairy farm so I was very used to farming. I consider housework as work. I don't enjoy housework and I guess I would be like a lot (of other women) and say anything that you don't enjoy is work but I would much rather be outside and yet living here and this is our, you know, we're our bosses and all that...My garden I don't consider that as work because...that's therapy and I relax when I'm out there. Everything in general is work but I guess you have to rate it on a one to ten and the only way I would rate it is according to...whether I enjoyed it or not. It would be hard work if I didn't enjoy it, it would be easy work if I did enjoy it.

The commitment of the women in this study to farming as a lifestyle is reflected in the following example:

> J: I don't know how we can make you (society) understand our devotion to the land for one thing and how important it is to us. It becomes a part of you...

The individual context also is seen in farm women's decisions to work off the farm. The informants in this study indicate the importance of off farm work in enhancing their sense of self:

> J: ...it was something for me that I could do for myself to make me separate, to give my ego a boast because it was something I enjoyed doing and it made me a better person I think for my kids and family

> D: ...it's good for me...my mind doesn't become stagnated with grain and pigs and kids, you know, I have other things that I have to put my mind on and keep my skills up and communicate with other people somewhere else in the world

Farm women's enjoyment of and interest in activities selected also influences what they do to some extent. All of the women in this study indicate there are things they do that they enjoy and things they don't enjoy. However, enjoyment of the task is not the only indicator of an activity likely to be selected. Often they indicate activities in which they participate but which they do only if they have to or because they feel they should.

> M: (In discussing cards sorted from a card sort interview) ...these here ones are also the things that I enjoy doing very much, it's some people like jogging, some people like whatever, after their busy day and to me to go out and to be outside with the cattle or whatever, just messing with them, that makes me feel good, to relax, so that when I come in to do all my household things I feel, I feel good to be in and have supper...that kind of puts you at peace for the day...

Some women are more likely to participate in particular activities because of a particular skill they have:

> D: see I do a better job of castrating and giving shots and clipping teeth than (my husband) does so he doesn't do it, that's you know, that's something I do

Clearly, the individual factors contribute to some extent to farm women's activity participation.

Social/Community Context

The social/community context of a farm family also plays a role in farm women's activity participation. This context is concerned with the effects of such things as society's image of what farm women are like, social expectations, and sanctions against non-conformity. One farm woman interviewed summarized what she believed to be the image of farm women by society in general:

> J: I get really annoyed with that old image of the dumb farmer or she's just a farmer's wife...society in general doesn't put much stock or much value on a farm wife and I think they're really important...I don't think that we're, we give them credit for a lot of the things that we do and take for granted. Farm women know about the machines, they know about the crop, they know about the animals, plus everything that every other woman knows about and I think that should command more respect than it does. You know farm women are often laughed at by society as a whole...the kind of things that are important to them I think are overlooked by society.

It appears, from the women's perspective, society does not understand fully the scope of farm women's work. All of the women this researcher studied to date indicated that such activities as housecleaning, grocery shopping, laundry, canning, and meeting the needs of their children are things they "must do" or "have to" do, and/or are their "responsibility".

> D: (in considering the domestic sphere indicates) it's something you have to do, you know. But everybody has to do it ...would a woman in town say...if she was in the house all the time and didn't have to work outside the home, is that work, or is that her social responsibility?

Later when considering the impact off farm work would have on domestic tasks D indicates:

> D: if I worked off the farm, anything I did outside the home (doing farm work), then I would consider work because it would be taken up in the time that I was supposed to be doing my womanly, motherly socialized duties...

These women seem to have perceived and acted upon the societal expectation that domestic work is their responsibility.

The social context can be seen in other ways. There appear to be social expectations associated with meeting one's family needs.

> J: ...moms still have to bake the brownies to send ... they take their turn being the mom of the day and they take their turn driving or chaperoning a field trip...
>
> D: A lot of them (other farm women) will also make full course meals and take to the field...

There also are expectations about what things farm women should do on the farm:

> D: ...in Europe they use just about strictly women in farrowing barns because they have a higher understanding and they are much calmer around the sows when they're farrowing and the sows will react to that so ah from the very first time we had sows I would go out there
>
> D: I get a lot of flack from women saying that I work too hard, do too much but they consider anything out of the house, like outside the house (as too much)

Women who do not conform to the "established" ways of life often experience pressure to conform to the community standard. The following interchange illustrates the threat of sanctions against nonconformity:

> Researcher: if a sales clerk asked you what you did when you were cashing a cheque or something like that what would you say to them?
> K: ...my work in (the local community)
> R: ...your work in (the local community) is what? Educational Psychologist?
> K: yep but I wouldn't say that to a person who was at Woolworths because that would just freak them out...(she goes on to explain why she feels this way)...they'll look at me in a different way if I call myself that and they'll maybe feel a bit intimidated by that...but I think that their whole view of you changes...in the local community their whole view of you, you almost become a scary person...I think it can be intimidating...I think that's what they feel like sometimes like they can't talk to me about canning...and off course they can talk to me about canning...I want to fit in, like I don't want to make it more difficult for my husband because I work off the farm and doing the role that I do...

The following example also illustrates the subtle pressure to conform to the particular 'reference group':

> D: a lot of people would say you do too much out there, you know, you work to hard, you shouldn't have to do all that...a lot of them have the impression that if there's too many of us out there in the combines and the tractors it's gonna make the rest of them look bad and look like they don't do anything...

Social pressure to conform also could be seen when the women were asked about the reasons for having a family garden:

> R: because that's something that everybody does...it's just something that you are kind of expected to do so that was really the main motivator
>
> K: partly because I think that it is expected, like there is that part of it in there. Like out here people have vegetable gardens and if you don't have a vegetable garden, you know that, you know most people have vegetable gardens and I think I conform to that.

While the above are quite blatant examples of the influence of the social context upon farm women's decisions about activity participation, it seems quite possible that more subtle norms and values also are playing a role within the social context. The above examples give only a glimmer of understanding relative to the impact of socially prescribed "tradition" and hence the impact of the social context upon farm women's participation in particular activities.

Interactions Between the Context's

Within the contextual field, the environmental context is most likely to interact with the other four contextual fields. The farm structure, while greatly influenced by the environmental context, also is influenced by family, individual and social/community contextual variables. There also is an interaction of influence between the family, individual and social/community variables which influence and are influenced by the farm structure. It is the interaction of the five contextual elements which finally result in the farm women becoming involved in particular activities. This

process of decision making about activities occurs continuously - from moment to moment, day to day, month to month. The various contextual factors are weighed and balanced as activities are considered for participation. Hence the actual participation in particular tasks is a behavioral reflection of the decisions the women make upon consideration of the contextual elements. The decisions made each time are unique to the moment they are made and depend upon the weighing and balancing of the various contextual elements at the time. The following are examples of some of the interactions between the various contexts.

The environment has an impact upon the farm structure. The actual type of farm, the physical layout of the farm and its buildings, would all be environmentally dictated and hence would continuously influence the decisions farm women make relative to activity participation. There are a variety of "types" of farms with their own unique needs and influences. For example, a grain only farm would exert different influences and have different needs than a livestock farming operation such as a dairy farm. Seven of the eight women in this study were involved in some form of mixed farming operation which involved the different influences of livestock operations as well as grain operations. While some were on predominantly livestock farms, they all experienced the seasonal fluctuations associated with grain operations because they all had field crops which required seeding and harvesting. Those who had livestock experienced the 24 hour nature of livestock operations where the regular care and feeding as well as birthing and other medical treatments took place constantly.

The farm structure and decisions regarding activity selection also are influenced by the family unit, the individual women, and the society or community in which the farm is located. Farm family women live not only on a farm but as part of a family

which has a unique impact on the ways in which they make their decisions regarding activity participation.

M and her husband are partners with his parents in their farming operation. She talks about the impact of this dynamic on the activities in which she is likely to participate:

> M: ...because it's farming with family, it's not quite the same if it is just [my husband] and myself, like I told you before my father in-law is very, he doesn't think outside work is the place for mom and all that kind of stuff and so I tend to do only here what we have, like we've got my own little stock out here and chickens and things like that and when [my husband] is working out here I'm out here but as far as the other land I'm not. I take meals out to everybody that needs it but as far as getting out there and doing whatever extra I don't do that because it doesn't seem to go over too big.

The extended family and its existing farm structure plays a role in the likelihood that an informant would participate in particular tasks. One of the women studied, who married a man who already was farming described the impact of an existing family farm structure in this way:

> R: ...his younger sisters were always helping out with chores. And like I was, I guess not really expected, but I guess, when I grew up, my dad also had cows, so I knew a little bit about milking...so I did my part to help
>
> M: it's not quite the same if it was just (my husband) and myself, ah like I told you before my father in-law is very, ah, he doesn't think outside work is the place for mom ...so I tend to do only here

In these instances she must find her "place" in the farm family interactions and is often influenced very early on in her decisions about those activities in which she will participate. Seven of the eight informants married into farming where their new husband had been working with his parents on the farm for some time. A new member of the family needed to become involved in tasks with an awareness of the dynamics existing prior to her arrival. Having the brother-in-law or parents involved in partnership with the informant's husband created constraints. On the other hand,

women who worked with their husbands to manage the farming operation separate from extended family or without extended family interference, tended to play a more active role in the farm business. DI talked about her experience of the extended family as it has changed since she was married:

> DI: My husband's father sold the farm to both his sons...and he (father in law) doesn't own any machinery. But he (father in law) does own two quarters of land...the boys (sons) each take a quarter and they plant, seed the crops and harvest it for him. But in turn he helps them out...they were farming together, the three of them together when we got married.
> R: Has your role changed as that situation has evolved?
> DI: When we got married I got involved...(but) I wasn't as involved in the financial end of it
> R: Has your physical involvement changed?
> DI: Yes...I would say that I am more involved...the major change would be the decision making because I didn't really do a whole lot of that.

The presence of children exerts an influence on farm women's task participation. A woman with small children must take into consideration their needs and care when planning what to do from moment to moment. Tied into the needs of young children is the proximity of the family home to the main farming activity. Women with young children are able to select from a wider range of choices if the family home is close to the main farming activity. When the children are younger, the demands on the women are greater as often they are required to be responsible for child care while working in the barn or on a tractor.

> D: (farm and family) was more intermeshed when they were babies because then you could take them in the tractor with you, I took them into the barn with me because they had to be with me. As they got older, that's when the parting of the ways started and I would have to do this and then also make up the time to do something with them...

As the children grow older, there is a greater ability to take on different responsibilities and tasks. DI talked about how her involvement on the farm changed after the birth of the children and as they grew older in the following example:

DI: ...before we had children I was quite involved in the farm...and then when they were babies I was almost totally uninvolved except for whatever could be done verbally
R: So you were still involved with the decision making?
DI: yea...my particular changes probably would be more involved in input actively (going out and doing the work)...and in the decision making and then it deteriorated as well, with one child and then when I had twins I was almost completely involved (in child care) for about two years...we still talked things over and then last year (it) really was the first year that I got back into it, spring and fall...and as they get into school, like the twins now are five so give another year, then probably [husband] and I will leave the house at the same time during the day.

DI's reaction to her child care responsibilities was to decrease her direct farm involvement until the children were of school age. However, informants with older children talked of the different and expanded farm responsibilities which are assumed:

D: We have definitely made and I would call it a conscious effort since they started school, to make sure that if they need drivers for field trips if they have ball games, if they have something, that one or both of us will be there so that they know that off the farm they are not less important to us than other children are to their parents. You know because on the farm in spring and fall they can not see (my husband) for two days or for a day or I mean for a day and a half, they'll put themselves to bed or something like that...with the age they are at but that's been a conscious effort...their personalities are such that they're ecstatic about that...if something goes on that we can't be there, it's...they're disappointed...

As can be seen from these examples, the final decisions about task participation are not always set in stone. As the model in Figure 1 illustrates, once the task is undertaken, decision making begins again with the list of all possible activities. While some activities continue to be tasks the women perform for extended periods of time, as time passes the list of potential tasks can and will change according to various life events such as children growing up, illness, injury of a family member, catastrophes and the like. For these reasons, it is assumed that even those activities farm women are more likely to participate in can change.

While all of the above descriptions deal with the contexts individually, they by no means operate in isolation from one another. Examples from one contextual description may be equally appropriate for describing another.

V Discussion

Farm Women's Definition of Work

As was seen in the review of the literature, as well as the data from this study, farm women are involved in a wide variety of tasks associated with farm, family and household. These tasks have been defined as work in the existing research. However, for the women this researcher studied, not all things in which they were involved were viewed by the women as work. Hence, it became necessary to take into account what it is the farm women deem work and how they view the other tasks in which they are involved.

While the intent of the study was not to look directly at what tasks farm women participate in, all of the women studied indicated involvement in at least some activities related to the farm enterprise, household and family tasks and community work. What is unique about this research is its attention to the terms used by farm women to define the various tasks they perform. Within the literature the tasks farm women do are deemed the 'work' of farm women. However, the farm women studied in this research clearly have different terms for different tasks, with those tasks most directly connected to economic gain or the family's 'livelihood' being referred to as work. Usually, direct farm related tasks and/or off farm work which is performed to support the family farm unit are thought to be work. Off farm work which is undertaken purely for personal reasons, is less likely to be viewed as work. It was found that while all activities can be considered by the women to be work, the various contextual elements - particularly the seasonal element - have an impact upon the women's classification of tasks as work in some cases and not in others.

Another striking finding of this research, although not a major emphasis, was that three of the informants were involved in paid work which took place on the family

farm (See table 5, Appendix 1). Research to date does not appear to have investigated this type of work but has studied what they call off farm work. The women this researcher studied do not refer to their on farm work for pay as off farm work and, hence, their financial contribution to the family farm unit would be lost to researchers.

Model of Family Farm Women's Activity Participation

Consistent with the grounded theory method of data collection and analysis, the model presented is a synthesis of the research data obtained through qualitative research methods used in this research, ideas from a variety of family and social theorists, and a review of the literature on family farm women. Following is a discussion of the findings from this research, existing family and social theories and research related to family farm women.

Throughout the research process, it was important to develop a sense of the women's experiences associated with task participation. The women consistently talked about five contextual variables which affected not only their definition of some tasks as work and others as non-work but also affected the likelihood of their participation in particular tasks from moment to moment, day to day and year to year.

The **Context** of activity participation consistently appeared as a key factor in determining farm women's likelihood of participating in particular activities. Five factors played an important role before, during and after task participation in determining the likelihood of farm women's participation in tasks from moment to moment, day to day and even year to year. These include the effects of the environment, farm structure, family structure, social/community influences, and individual variables.

The contextual element experienced by the informants to be most influential in farm women's life is the **environmental context.** This context includes the effect of

changing weather conditions, the livestock needs and the crop needs as they affect decisions which must always be made with an awareness of their needs, if the farm is to survive. While existing farm research deals with the tasks specific to the various seasons (Draughn et al., 1988; Farmline, 1982; Scholl, 1983; Scholl, 1982), few studies deal with the impact of the environment on participation in particular activities. Clearly, the data from this research suggests an affect. Further study is required to understand more fully this contextual element as it relates to farm women's selection of activities.

The **farm structure** has been considered to some extent, within the existing research which considers farm women's work. Gasson (1980), in a study of British farms, notes that on some types of farms, particularly smaller dairy holdings, farm women's contribution is much greater than on non-dairy farms. Burton and White (1984), found that farming operations which depended upon domesticated animals were more likely to increase the time women spent doing farm work activities. Women were seen to spend more time caring for animals and processing animals' products (Burton & White, 1984). Burton and White (1984) also found that tree crops had low female participation while root crops were especially high in female participation. With the exception of these few studies, there appears to have been little research which studies the impact of the type of farming operation on the likelihood of farm women's participation in activities. There is a need to conduct further research dealing with the differing influences of the various farm types on the likelihood of farm women's participation in activities.

The ability to hire help, both inside and out of the home, was found by this researcher to have an affect upon the decisions farm women make in selecting activities. There does not appear to be any farm research dealing with the effects of hired help on

farm women's participation in particular activities. However, in a study of farms in Britain, Gasson (1980) indicates that over three-quarters of the agricultural holdings in Britain have no full time employees. These findings indicate the potential significance of farm women's contribution to the total work force on the farm. In a U.S. Study of women's role in agriculture, Farmline (1982) found that younger women were more likely to perform heavier farm jobs, reducing the need to hire help. However, these findings gave no indication regarding the factors or potential reasons involved in the farm women's likelihood of participating in particular activities nor do they indicate the reasons the farm families chose to involve the women in tasks instead of hire help. Further study into the affect of hired help on farm women's task participation would be valuable.

The particular business arrangement (legal partnership, non-partnership etc.) between husband and wife also play a role in the decisions women make about their activity participation. It seems from this study there is at least some support for the notion that business arrangements influenced the women's task participation. While there appears to have been little research which clearly indicates a potential influence of partnership or other legal agreements on farm women's participation in particular activities, some insight can be extracted from what does exist. Sawer (1973) found that a wife's farm business partnership role as it is connected to farm decision-making, strongly related to her active involvement in farm tasks and seeking of agricultural information. She further suggests that such contextual variables as family size, income and farm size can restrict or encourage farm women's participation in farm decisions. The above research appears to support the findings from this researchers data. More research is necessary to understand more fully the impact of women's partnership on activity participation.

In summary, the influence of the type of farm appears to have the most support, both from this study's data and the research literature, for the activity selection of farm women. Other factors such as ability to hire help, and partnership seem suported to some extent in the existing literature. However, further research would be necessary to be sure of the type of influence.

The **family contextual** field also was found to have an effect on farm women's task participation and is concerned with family relational issues. It includes the content of the positions within the family and the roles assigned to the family members which are unique to the family structure (Rodgers, 1973).

Extended family, on a family run farm, also was found to be related to the farm women's participation in particular activities. It was found that those women who married into a farm family (even when they had a farming background and/or upbringing) were less likely to be involved in farm work tasks than women who were involved in farming with less extended family influence. Bott (1971), in a study of non-farm families, found that a high degree of connectedness in family network increased the segregation in the role-relationship of the couple and those couples who had loose-knit family networks were more likely to have a joint role-relationship. That is, consistent with the findings of this research, she found the degree of segregation in activity organization seems to vary directly with the connectedness of the family network.

Farm research related to farm family relationships as they are connected to farm women's task participation is quite limited. The only exception considers activity participation as it relates to how the couple came to be on the farm. Gasson (1980) found that when farm women and their husbands started farming together with their husbands after marriage the women were more likely to play an active role in the farm

business than if they married a man who was already farming. Where the husband is already in the farm business and the wife not familiar with it, opportunities for her to influence decisions are limited (Gasson, 1980). In this instance she must find her "place" in the farm family interactions and is often influenced very early on in her selection of activities to participate in. Most times, the farm woman's new husband has been working with his parents on the farm for some time. A new member of this family would have to make decisions about task participation with an awareness of the dynamics which existed prior to her arrival. According to Gasson (1980), this is further complicated if the husbands brother or parents are involved in partnership with him. Conversely, women who start farming with their husbands tend to play a more active role in the farm business than if they marry into the farm (Gasson, 1980). These findings appear to lend support for the model presented by this researcher.

Keating and Munro (In press) suggest there may be a life cycle or cohort effect associated with the amount of work farm women in which are involved. They found that younger women, who are typically beginning farming and have young children, usually had a higher amount of task participation than older women. It seems for these women the inability to hire help, probably for economic reasons, and their large child rearing responsibilities results in a larger work load (Keating & Munro, In press). Conversely, Keating and Munro found lower rates of involvement by older women. One reason they suggest for the lower rates of work involvement is that women are moving into the retirement stage of the farm cycle in which there is less need for their involvement. They also point to the wide variation in the manner in which farm women contribute to the farm operations within each age group. It may also be that the women they studied who were older never did participate extensively in the farming operation. Either interpretation of their results could be understood with the model developed by

this researcher. Their findings seem to indicate a process of decision making about task participation in which there are "trade-offs" among tasks. For example, a younger woman with small children may have a larger role in the domestic sphere and a smaller one with respect to farm tasks while a younger woman who works off the farm may make less direct labour contributions to the farm. There also may be contextual influences which increase or decrease the likelihood of women of various ages participating in particular tasks. For example, a farm and/or family structure which supports women's participation in farm tasks is more likely to have women who participate in farm tasks. This influence would not necessarily take precedence over other contextual influences such as the presence of young children. An increased awareness of farm women's experiences using the model presented might lend some clues to the differences in work behaviors over the life cycle

There exists a growing body of research which studies farm women's experience of stress and family dynamics. Such research appears to be looking for factors which might influence task participation. For example, Berkowitz & Perkins (1985) found that husband-wife relationships were crucial in differentiating negative and positive health factors. These findings indicate the importance of these relationships to farm women and potentially to their activity participation. Researchers consistently indicate an interdependence or interpersonal dynamic which exists in farm families which is an important source of predicting satisfaction (Berkowitz & Perkins, 1984; Keating, 1987). Other farm researchers have found husband and family support of farm women to be an important predictor of farm women's experiences of stress (Knaub, Draughn et al., 1988 ; Berkowitz & Perkins, 1984; Berkowitz & Perkins, 1985). It appears that women who reach an agreement with their husbands about their responsibilities report less stress (Berkowitz & Perkins, 1985). While there is no direct

support for the suggestion that stress and family dynamics influence activity participation in the research cited above, it seems possible that such a relationship exists. Such an influence should be studied more directly in future research.

The **individual context** was seen to influence the women's definition of various activities and their decisions about task participation. The individual context has been illustrated in sociological research. It is with an ability to act toward the self that a person faces and deals with the world (Blumer, 1979). It is through this conscious process of making indications to one's self that individuals give meaning to the things in their world, judge them and make decisions on the basis of the judgement (Blumer, 1979). It is also through the self that individuals construct their actions Blummer (1979) in an illustration of the many things an individual needs to take into account in the co[illegible]e of undertaking an action, states the following:

> "He has to note what he wants to do and how he is to do it; he has to point out to himself the various conditions which may be instrumental to his action and those which may obstruct his action; he has to take account of the demands, the expectations, the prohibitions, and the threats as they may arise in the situation in which he is acting. His action is built up step by step through a process of such self-indication." (Blumer, 1979, p. 21)

In the process of considering the many things that need to be taken into account during an action, the individual guides his/her actions by taking into account various things and interpreting their significance. However, it should be noted that any action taken by an individual occurs within a social context in which the individual interprets the meaning of the acts of others while aligning his actions to the situaion (Blumer, 1979).

Gasson (1980), in a study which most closely supports the findings of this research, found that while most farm women could become involved in a wide list of functions, they differed in the emphasis they gave to each function. Some regard

family and household as most important while others value decision making and manual farm work (Gasson, 1980). In any given setting, the characteristics of the individual farm women will impose a certain regularity on behavior (Gasson, 1980).

With the exception of Gasson's (1980) research, little effort has been made to study the various components of the individual context as they influence farm women's activity participation. Consistent with the findings of this study in which commitment to farming as a lifestyle was important, Kohl & Bennett (1982) found that "ideology" reflects a farm woman's intense interest in farming as a way of life. They found this type of woman enjoys being out of doors and enjoys the farm work. While they do not directly link this with task participation, this research indicates that a particular ideology has the potential to affect the likelihood of the women participating in particular tasks.

The women in this study who worked off the farm or on the farm for money did so because it was something they did for themselves. Keating et al. (1987) found that most of those she surveyed would continue to work off the farm, even if they didn't need to. It seems that,for at least some women, off farm work enhances their public identity separate from their husbands (Keating et al., 1987).

Clearly, we do not know enough about the individual factors which contribute to farm women's selection of activities for participation. Much of the research has focused on quantifying farm and family work to date. Expansion of the ideas developed by this researcher and those formulated in Gasson's (1980) research would be helpful in developing our understanding of farm women's activity participation.

The women studied in this research also felt a **social/community contextual** influence relative to the tasks they participated in. The women interviewed in this research perceived an "image" of what a farm woman was as well as an expectation

about what things they should be doing. This influence affected the decisions they made about activities in which to participate and the way they perceived themselves.

A family farm, like any social structure, has skills and values appropriate to the society within which it is located to ensure group survival (Wilson, 1971). These are the rules which are embedded in a particular culture. They represent our common understandings about what is and what should be and are the core of culture (Wilson, 1971). Hence, the particular 'reference group' of an individual is used to compare or evaluate one's position with that of others and to justify or explain actions (Bott, 1971). Farm women's context includes the community in which the farm is located as well as the greater society in which we all live.

Merrill (1969) suggests that when studying social interaction within any society, interaction among people is determined by the physical presence of others and by the socially prescribed bases upon which they act. Farm women, like all people, are shaped into cultural prescriptions which involve an interconnection of understandings which are necessary to membership within their community. Through a process of socialization, established ways of life are perceived as "the correct way of life" (Gil, 1987).

> "Non-conforming thoughts, communications, and actions are, therefore, viewed as threats and tend to be prohibited, repressed, and punished while conforming thoughts, communications, and behavior are encouraged and rewarded." (Gil, 1987, p.8)

Hence, farm women's roles are, at least partially, inherited or formed from the community in which they reside. Roles and expectations evolve about one's community, through a process of re-working individual experience. "The element of time is important because the past influences the thoughts and actions of each of us, operating through the heritage of the group." (Merrill, 1969 p.80). As a result, roles

differ from community to community and even within the community as conceptions about what is and what should be varies.

It seems quite possible that more subtle norms and values also are playing a role within the social context. The examples from the data in this research give a glimmer of understanding about the affect of socially prescribed "tradition" and hence, the impact of the social context upon farm women's activity participation. Keating and Munro (In Press), suggest that the historical context of farm women's work varies depending on the existing structure of agriculture and upon the contemporary attitudes to women's farm labour. One study, conducted by Blood (1958) in the fifties, found that farm wives were most often helpers for their husbands. He concluded that this is likely because as helpers they performed tasks which required little strength or skill making farm women, the best choice for helpers. Fink (1987) also supports the notion that farm women in the fifties were seen as junior, unskilled helpers. However, the findings from the eighties indicate that more women are entering agricultural colleges with career plans in production agriculture (Lyson, 1981). Keating and Munro (In Press) suggest that if farm women in the eighties are not developing the knowledge about the farm operation, they may continue to see themselves as helpers because of a lack of knowledge, rather than a segregation of gender roles as in the fifties. In fact, this research found many indications that many farm women still see themselves as helpers. Further research is necessary to develop a broader awareness and understanding of farming as a culture (or subgroup of society), particularly as it relates to farm women's activity selection.

Summary

While not unique to sociological literature, the use of 'context' to understand farm women's work behavior is relatively unique. Gasson's (1980) research appears

to be the only exception. Her study looked at economic, social, cultural, historical contexts, as well as individual characteristics which impact upon women's role[1] on the farm. Unlike this research, Gasson (1980) defined three role types which she sought to support and attempted to find determinants of role type. Hence, she limited the way in which she studied the effect of context to factors which influenced the women's assumption of and subsequent behavior in one of the three role's. While taking an important step forward relative to past farm research, it was unfortunate that Gasson (1980) limited the number of contextual factors studied and the stereotypical way in which she would consider their influence. This research, on the other hand, tended to be more open and found an interaction between the various contexts with some having greater influence over the others generally but not exclusively. The contextual factors found by this researcher were also found to have an ongoing influence which accounted for changes in behaviors over time.

In conclusion, there were three important findings of this research. First, work is not defined by the women in the same way as it is defined in the current research. This researcher found work was viewed by the women studied primarily as those things which were related to the farm family's livelihood. Secondly, five contextual elements influence the farm women's decisions about task participation from moment to moment, and day to day. Thirdly, the definition of the word 'work' is influenced by the contextual variables - particularly (but not exclusively) the environmental context. For example, during peak seasons everything can be called work. These five contexts interact with one another to influence the women's decisions about task performance for each situation encountered.

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[1]Gasson (1980) defined role as the associated actions, responsibilities and relationships which are part of the occupation of farmer.

While somewhat more comprehensive than Gasson's (1980) work, the findings of this research are by no means exhaustive with respect to all the contextual elements which could potentially influence farm women's task performance. More needs to be known about the contextual elements which impact upon farm women's behaviors. As well, more indepth research, both qualitative and quantitative, which attempts to determine as many contextual influences as possible and their role in farm women's behaviors would be fruitful.

VI Implications

A number of hypotheses can be derived from the findings of this study. In general, the context of activity participation influences farm women's decisions about task participation. The following hypotheses are included to illustrate relations among the five contextual elements and farm women's decisions about activity participation.

1) The environmental context influences farm women's decisions about activity participation.

2) The farm structure context influences farm women's decisions about activity participation.

3) The individual context influences farm women's decisions about activity participation.

4) The family context influences farm women's decisions about activity participation.

5) The community/societal context influences farm women's decisions about activity participation.

6) The environmental context has greater influence than the farm structure, individual, family and community/societal context's on farm women's decisions about task participation.

Future Research

Findings from this research and the related research suggest the need to better understand farm women's perceptions about work and task performance. It seems necessary to look beyond the "what do farm women do?" question which is so

prevalent in the research. There is a need to direct future research to the development of an awareness of how farm women view their world from their own unique perspective. Such an awareness would further both the women's and society's understanding, awareness and evaluation of their contributions to family farms.

The concept of 'context' as a factor involved in farm women's task participation also could benefit from further investigation. With the exception of Gasson's (1980) research, there has been little effort to look systematically at those factors which influence farm women's participation in particular tasks. It seems if we are to fully conceptualize the experience of work of farm women, we need to develop a better appreciation of those things which influence that experience. A conscious more knowledgeable understanding of decision-making, regarding task selection could enhance the general function of the family farm unit.

Further qualitative research which investigates the various contexts and more fully considers their relative influence in decisions, would be valuable. Such research would not only increase our knowledge of the impact of context on work behaviours, it also would provide a more in depth understanding of the many variables within each context (some of which were identified within this study and probably some of which were not).

This study also should be followed up with a quantitative analysis of those factors which influence farm women's participation in particular tasks. Effort should be made to develop a sense of the relative influence of the five contexts. Through a clearer understanding of context as it influences task participation the farm family unit and bankers, policy makers and society as a whole will be more likely to value the contributions of family farm women.

It also would be of interest to do comparative research between farm women and urban women, both of whom live with a family business. It would seem plausible to expect their experiences would have similarities as well as their own unique differences. While the actual contexts may change in relative influence, it is quite possible that the way in which they influence women's decisions about work behaviour may not be that different. An understanding of the differences in experience would lend a further understanding of women and work generally.

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VIII Appendix

Interview Guide

TOPICAL AREAS/QUESTIONS

- DESCRIBE A TYPICAL DAY
- WHAT ACTIVITIES DO YOU VIEW AS "WORK"?
- WHAT THINGS DO YOU DO THAT ARE NOT "WORK"?
- WHAT DO YOU CALL THESE ACTIVITIES?
- TELL ME THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN WORK AND NON-WORK ACTIVITIES?
- TELL ME WHAT IS SIMILAR ABOUT WORK AND NON-WORK ACTIVITIES?
- HOW DID YOU DECIDE WHICH ACTIVITIES YOU WOULD BE INVOLVED IN ON THE FARM?
- IS THERE A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FARM AND FAMILY WORK?
- DESCRIBE THE DIFFERENCES AND/OR SIMILARITIES?
- CITY WOMEN GET TO LEAVE WORK TO BE WITH THEIR FAMILY OR FAMILY TO BE AT WORK - YOU DON'T HAVE THIS FREEDOM - TALK TO ME ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE OF WORK AND FAMILY BEING SO CLOSE AND INTERCONNECTED.
- YOU HAVE WORK [OFF THE FARM OR EXTA TO THE FARM] - DOES IT AFFECT YOUR FAMILY AND/OR THE FARM?
- HOW WAS THE DECISION MADE THAT YOU WOULD WORK OFF THE FARM?
- WOULD YOU CONTINUE TO WORK IF YOU DID NOT HAVE TO? - WHY OR WHY NOT?
- IF A SALES CLERK ASKED YOU WHAT YOU DID, WHEN YOU WERE CASHING A CHEQUE, WHAT WOULD YOU SAY? - TELL ME ABOUT WHAT [THE TITLE SHE USED] THAT MEANS TO YOU.
- IS THERE ANYTHING ABOUT YOUR WORK EXPERIENCE AS A FARM WOMAN YOU THINK I SHOULD KNOW OR YOU THINK MIGHT BE HELPFUL?

Informed Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
FACULTY OF HOME ECONOMICS
DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY STUDIES

Informed Consent Form

PROJECT TITLE: The Meaning of Work of Farm Women
INVESTIGATOR: Laurie Wilson-Larson Phone 426-4581

The purpose of this research project is to increase our understanding of the work experience of farm women. Interviews will be conducted. Interviews will last approximately one to one and a half hours. During these interviews questions will be asked regarding your work experiences as a farm woman. Interviews will be taped and will not be shared with anyone other than the research team, however, the final report, containing anonymous quotations, will be available to all at the end of the study.

There may be no direct benefits to the participants of this study, but there may be an increased awareness and understanding of the work experience of farm women with the potential to influence future educational and policy decisions.

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT I,_____
(print name)

HEREBY agree to participate as a volunteer in the above named project.

I hereby give permission to be interviewed and for these interviews to be tape-recorded. I understand that, at the completion of the research, the tapes will be erased. I understand that the information may be published, but my name will not be associated with the research.

I understand that I am free to deny any answer to specific questions asked of me. I also understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and terminate my participation at any time, without penalty.

I have been given the opportunity to ask whatever questions I desire, and all such questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

_____ _____
Participant Witness

_____ _____
Researcher Date